

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05

OC-06 CCO-00 OMB-01 CU-02 DHA-02 /083 W

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O 291410Z JUL 77

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6482

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DURBAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 1975

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SF

SUBJECT: SOWETO TENSE AS POLICE PREPARE FOR WEEKEND OF VIOLENCE

1. POTENTIAL FOR OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN SOWETO TONIGHT (JULY 29) AND SUNDAY (JULY 31) APPEARS VERY HIGH. SERIES OF POLICE-STUDENT CONFRONTATIONS INVOLVING STONE THROWING, SHOTS FIRED INTO THE AIR, AND THE USE OF POLICE DOGS HAS PRODUCED A VERY TENSE ATMOSPHERE THIS AFTERNOON. POLCOUNS AND CONOFF VISITING SOWETO TODAY NOTICED GRIM MOOD OF RESIDENTS AND WERE WARNED BY ONE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL "TROUBLE IS IMMINENT, WITH A LIKELY OUTBREAK TONIGHT".

2. SUNDAY, JULY 31, PUBLIC MEETING CALLED BY COMMITTEE OF TEN TO DISCUSS BLUEPRINT FOR SOWETO RULE IS RUMORED TO BE PROBABLE SCENE OF VIOLENT CONFRONTATION. GIVEN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE AND LIKELIHOOD OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IN THE STREET AROUND MEETING HALL, THERE WILL PROBABLY EXIST A FLAMABLE AND DANGEROUS SITUATION. RIOT POLICE IN
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CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORM ARE ALREADY BIVOUACED IN SOWETO AND POLICE PATROLS APPEAR HEAVIER THAN NORMAL. ALL TRAFFIC OUT OF SOWETO IS BEING SEARCHED BY POLICE AT ROADBLOCKS.

3. ONE AFTERNOON NEWSPAPER HAS REPORTED A REQUEST HAS BEEN FILED BY THE POLICE TO BAN SUNDAY COMMITTEE OF TEN MEETING. THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY MEASURE AS THE MEETING IS SCHEDULED

FOR A SUNDAY IN A SOWETO CHURCH.

4. COMMENT: WHILE THE MOOD IN SOWETO IS INCREASINGLY DARK THESE DAYS, STUDENT BOYCOTTS IN THE PRETORIA AREA AND SPORADIC VIOLENCE IN OTHER TOWNSHIPS, PLUS THE HARD LINE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE OF TEN, ALL ADD UP TO CONTINUING TROUBLE. STUDENTS HAVE QUIETLY INFORMED SOME SOWETO HEADMASTERS THAT THEY WILL HENCEFORTH NO LONGER PARTICIPATE IN THE BANTU EDUCATION SYSTEM. FROM NOW ON, STUDENTS AT THOSE SCHOOLS (IN SOWETO) CLAIM THEY WILL CONDUCT GROUP STUDY SESSIONS IN CLASSROOMS WITHOUT GUIDANCE OF SCHOOL OFFICIALS. HOW POLICE RESPOND TO THIS SNOWBALLING SERIES OF EVENTS IS DIFFICULT TO SAY BUT, IN AN UNFORTUNATE MATTER OF TIMING, SOWETO'S SOMEWHAT PROGRESSIVE POLICE COMMISSIONER JAN VISSER IS STILL ON LEAVE FROM HIS POST, LEAVING THE COMMAND IN THE HANDS OF HIS DEPUTY AT A TIME WHEN THE POLICE WILL BE SHARPLY CHALLENGED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JOHANN01975
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770272-0872
Format: TEL
From: JOHANNESBURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977075/aaaaaecd.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a000366a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1839731
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOWETO TENSE AS POLICE PREPARE FOR WEEKEND OF VIOLENCE
TAGS: PINS, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a000366a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009